

# MEDIA RELEASE



20 May 2020

## Healthy food and care packages for homeless youth

Young people experiencing homelessness in Toowoomba have been offered a help line to combat the pressures inflicted by the coronavirus and its fallout.

The combined Rotary Clubs of Toowoomba have donated \$6000 to youth service organisations YellowBridge QLD and Emerge to help its young people access essential items and healthy meals.

“Every night in Toowoomba, there are around 140 young people who are living on our streets,” YellowBridge Chief Executive Officer Penny Hamilton said.

“Because of their living situation, they are more vulnerable to poor health and nutrition, which is of added concern during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Ms Hamilton said.

“And to make things worse, those who did have employment in the hospitality industry have lost their jobs because of the shutdowns.”

“It has caused a perfect storm scenario where vulnerable young people are now more vulnerable than ever, so we are extremely grateful to Rotary for recognising this and providing financial support.”

The Toowoomba Rotary donation will be used to prepare care packages containing essential personal products and hygiene supplies all purchased from local businesses.

“Youth is one of Rotary’s core focus areas so we are very proud that the Toowoomba Rotary clubs have come together to collectively support our local youth in this way,” Assistant District Governor Syd Owen said.

“We believe it’s essential to help our community’s young people and one of the best ways we can do that is by supporting the community organisations, like Emerge, who are already helping youth on the frontline,” he said.

Trained youth workers will personally deliver the care packages to those in most need and use the exchange as an opportunity to check the health and welfare of recipients.

It will also enable 100 youth to receive nutritious meals through Emerge’s social enterprise café in Station Street, Emerge Café, which employs and supports young people experiencing homelessness.

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“Youth homelessness is a community issue. We can only make a difference if our local businesses, community organisations and government services work together,” Ms Hamilton said.

“If we can help young people who are experiencing tough situations today stay healthy, stay connected and stay positive then we are helping to create a community that is more resilient, productive and harmonious for the future,” she said.

“We think that is worth our time, effort and resources and we’re glad that compassionate people like Toowoomba Rotary agree.”

**PHOTO: YOUTH HELP LINE:** Presenting the cheque for \$6000 to Emerge are (back row L-R) Rotary Toowoomba East Chair Andy Burke, Rotary Toowoomba South President Elect Barry Fagg, Garden City Network Chair Daniel McNamara, Rotary Toowoomba North President Chris Seydel, Rotary Club of Toowoomba President, David Snow, Rotary Toowoomba City President Maureen Henderson and (front L-R): Rotary Club Toowoomba Garden City Assistant Governor Syd Owen, Emerge trainee Tyreece Hiles, YellowBridge QLD Chief Executive Officer Penny Hamilton, Emerge Director Jen Shaw.



**MEDIA CONTACT:** Heather Smith, 0403 462 686, [heather@wishbone.com.au](mailto:heather@wishbone.com.au)